

LOVE-LETTERS OF A
VIOLINIST



ERIC MACKAY



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1906

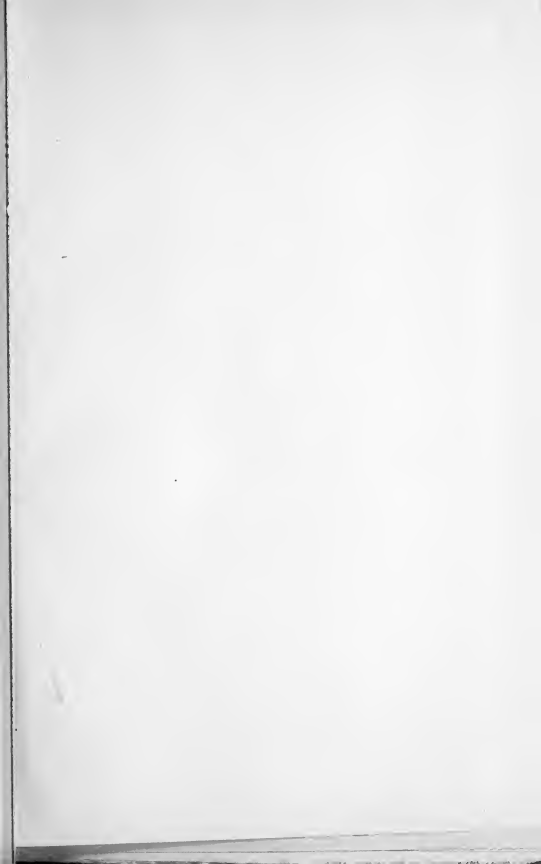
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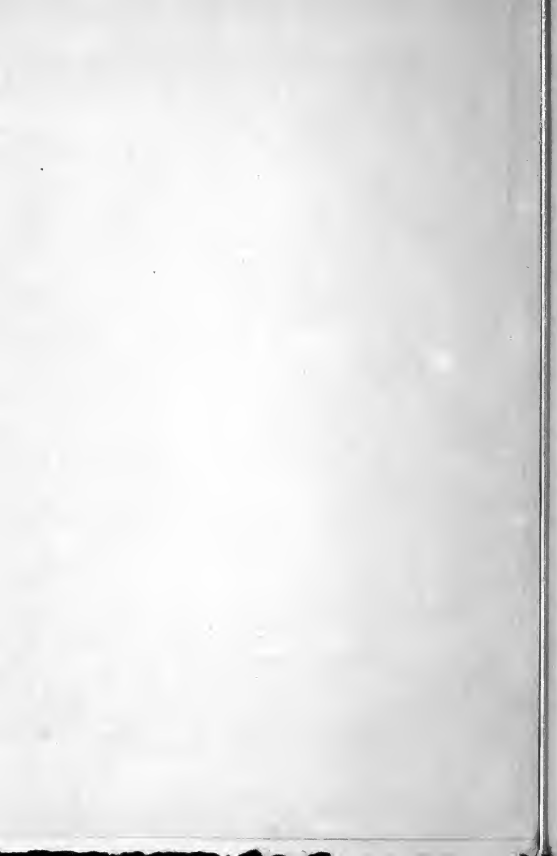
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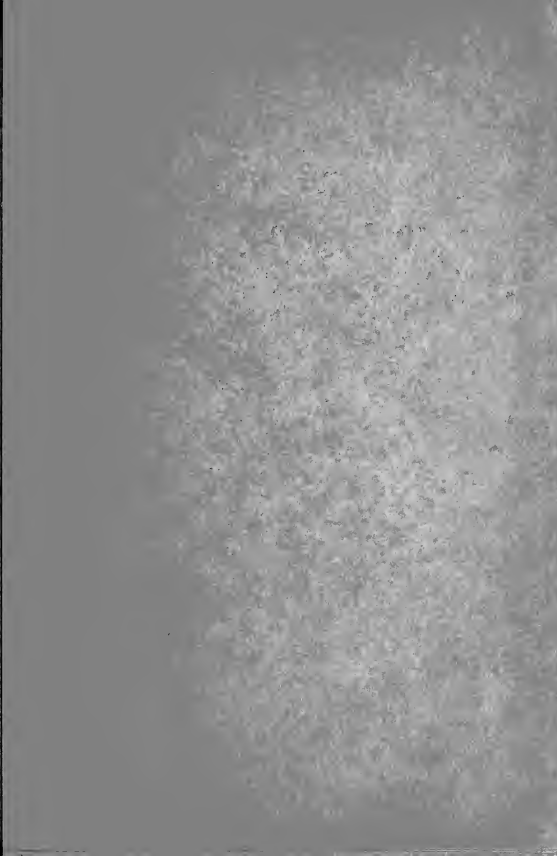














LOVE-LETTERS *of a Violinist*



*Eric
Mackay*

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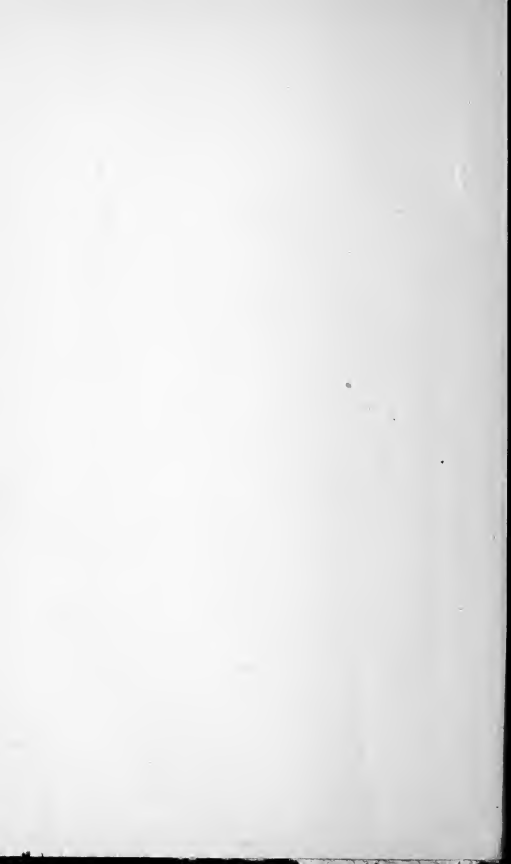
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Love Letters of a Violinist



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Love Letters of a Violinist

LETTER FIRST

PRELUDE

TEACH me to love thee as a man, in
prayer,

May love the picture of a sainted nun,
And I will woo thee, when the day is
done,

With tears and vows, and fealty past
compare,

And seek the sunlight in thy golden hair,
And kiss thy hand to claim thy benison.

I shall not need to gaze upon the skies,
Or mark the message of the morning
breeze,

❧ Love Letters

Or heed the notes of birds among the
trees,
If, taught by thee to yearn for Paradise,
I may confront thee with adoring eyes
And do thee homage on my bended
knees.

For I would be thy pilgrim; I would
bow
Low as the grave, and, lingering in
the same,
Live like a sceptre; or be burnt in
flame
To do thee good. A kingdom for a vow
I'd freely give to be elected now
The chief of all the servants of thy
fame.

Yea, like a Roman of the days of old,
I would, for thee, construct a votive
shrine,

of a Violinist ❀

And fan the fire, and consecrate the
wine;

And have a statue there, of purest gold,
And bow thereto, unlov'd and uncon-
soled,

But proud withal to know the statue
thine.

For it were sacrilege to stand erect,
And face to face, within thy chamber
lone,

To urge again my right to what hath
flown:

A bygone trust, a passion coldly check'd!
Were I a king of men, or laurel-deck'd,
I were not fit to claim thee as mine
own.

What am I then? The sexton of a joy,
So lately slain, — so lately on its bier

❖ Love Letters

Laid out in state, — I dare not, for
the fear
Of this dead thing, regard it as a toy.
It was a splendid Hope without alloy,
And now, behold! I greet it with a
tear.

It is my pastime, and my penance, too,
My pride, my comfort, and my discontent,
To count my sorrows ere the day is
spent,
And dream, at night, of love within the
blue
Of thy sweet eyes, and tremble through
and through,
And keep my house, as one that doth
lament.

Have I not sinn'd? I have; and I am
curs't,

of a Violinist ❀

And Misery makes the moments, as
they fly,
Harder than stone, and sorrier than a
sigh.

Oh, I did wrong thee when I met thee
first,

And in my soul a fantasy was nurs'd
That seem'd an outcome of the upper
sky.

I thought a poor musician might aspire;
I thought he might obtain from thee a
look,

As Dian's self will smile upon a
brook,

And make it glad, though deaf to its de-
sire,

And tinge its ripples with a tender fire,
And make it thankful in its lonely
nook.

❖ Love Letters

I thought to win thee ere the waning
days

Had caught the snow, ere yet a word
of mine

Had pall'd upon thee in the summer
shine;

And I was fain to meet thee in the ways
Of wild romance, and cling to thee, and
gaze,

Between two kisses, on thy face
divine.

Ay! on thy face, and on the rippling
hair

That makes a mantle round thee in
the night,

A royal robe, a network of the light,
Which fairies brought for thee, to keep
thee fair,

And hide the glories of a beauty rare

of a Violinist ❀

As those of sylphs, whereof the poets
write.

I thought, by token of thy matchless
form,

To curb thy will, and make thee mine
indeed,

From head to foot. There is no other
creed

For men and maids, in safety or in storm,
Than this of love. Repentance may be
warm,

But love is best, though broken like a
reed.

“She shall be mine till death!” I wildly
said,

“Mine, and mine only.” And I
vow’d, apace,

That I would have thee in my dwell-
ing-place;

✻ Love Letters

Yea, like a despot, I would see thee led
Straight to the altar, with a tear unshed,
A wordless woe imprinted on thy face.

I wanted thee. I yearned for thee afar.
"She shall be mine," I cried, "and
mine alone.

A Gorgon grief may change me into
stone

If I be balk'd." I hankered for a star,
And soar'd, in thought, to where the
angels are,
To snatch my prize beyond the torrid
zone.

I heeded not the teaching of the past.
I heeded not the wisdom of the years.
"She shall be mine," I urged, "till
death appears,
For death, I know, will conquer me at
last."

of a Violinist ❧

And then I found the sky was overcast ;
And then I felt the bitterness of tears.

“ Behold ! ” I thought, “ Behold, how
fair to see
Is this white wonder ! ” And I wish’d
thee well

But, like a demon out of darkest hell,
I marr’d thy peace, and claim’d thee on
the plea

Of pride and passion ; and there came to
me
The far-off warning of a wedding-
bell.

A friend of thine was walking to her
doom,
A wife-elect, who, ere the summer sun
Had plied its course, would weep for
what was done, —

A friend of thine and mine, who, in the
gloom
Of her own soul, had built herself a
tomb,
To tremble there, when tears had
ceas'd to run.

On this I brooded; but ah! not for this
Did I abandon what I sought the
while:
The dear damnation of thy tender
smile,
And all the tortures that were like a
bliss,
And all the raptures of a holier kiss
Than fair Miranda's on the magic
isle.

I urged my suit. "My bond!" I did
exclaim,

of a Violinist ❀

“ My pink and white, the hand I love
to press,

The golden hair that crowns her love-
liness;

And all the beauties which I cannot
name;

All, all are mine, and I will have the
same,

Though she should hate me for my
love's excess.”

I knew myself. I knew the withering fate
That would consume me, if, amid my
trust,

I sued for Hope as beggars for a crust,
“ O God!” I cried, entranced though
desolate,

“ Hallow my love, or turn it into hate.”
And then I bow'd, in anguish, to the
dust.

LETTER SECOND

SORROW

YES, I was mad. I know it. I was mad,
For there is madness in the looks of
love;
And he who frights a tender, brooding
dove
Is not more base than I, and not so sad;
For I had kill'd the hope that made me
glad,
And curs'd, in thought, the sunlight
from above.

He was a fool, indeed, who lately tried
To touch the moon, far-shining in the
trees.
He clomb the branches with his hands
and knees,

of a Violinist ❧

And craned his neck to kiss what he
espied.

But down he fell, unseemly in his pride,
And told his follies to the fitful breeze.

I was convicted of as strange a thing,
And wild as strange; for, in a hope
forlorn,

I fought with Fate. But now the flag
is torn

Which, like a herald in the days of
spring

I held aloft. The birds have ceased to
sing

The dear old songs they sang from
morn to morn.

All holy things avoid me. Breezes pass
And will not fan my cheek, as once
they did.

❧ Love Letters

The gloaming hies away like one for-
bid ;
And day returns, and shadows on the
grass
Fall from the trees ; and night and morn
amass
No joys for me this side the coffin-lid.

Absolve me, Sweet ! Absolve me, or I
die ;
And give me pardon, if no other
boon.
Ay, give me pardon, and the sun and
moon,
And all the stars that wander through
the sky
Will be thy sponsors, and the gladden'd
cry
Of one poor heart will thank thee for
it soon.

of a Violinist ❀

And mine Amati — my belovèd one —
The tender sprite who soothes, as best
he may,
My fever'd pulse, and makes a roun-
delay
Of all my fears — e'en he, when all is
done,
Will be thy friend, and yield his place to
none
To wish thee well, and greet thee day
by day.

For he is human, though, to look at
him,
To see his shape, to hear — as from
the throat
Of some bright angel — his ecstatic
note,
A sinful soul might dream of cherubim.

❖ Love Letters

Ay! and he watches when my senses
swim,

And I can trace the thoughts that o'er
him float.

Often, indeed, I tell him more than man
E'er tells to woman in the honied
hours

Of tranced night, in cities or in
bowers;

And more, perchance, than lovers in the
span

Of absent letters may, with scheming,
plan

For life's surrender in the fairy
towers.

And he consoles me. There is none I
find,

None in the world, so venturesome
and wild,

of a Violinist ❧

And yet withal, so tender, true, and
mild,
As he can be. And those who think him
blind
Are much to blame. His ways are ever
kind;
And he can plead as softly as a child.
And when he talks to me I feel the touch
Of some sweet hope, a feeling of content
Almost akin to what by joy is meant.
And then I brood on this; for Love is
such,
It makes us weep to want it overmuch,
If wayward Fate withhold his full
consent.
Oh, come to me, thou friend of my desire,
My lov'd Amati! At a word of thine

❖ Love Letters

I can be brave, and dash away the
brine
From off my cheek, and neutralize the
fire
That makes me mad, and use thee as a
lyre
To curb the anguish of this soul of
mine.

Wood as thou art, my treasure, with the
strings
Fair on thy form, as fits thy parent-
age,
I cannot deem that in a gilded cage
Thy spirit lives. The bird that in thee
sings
Is not a mortal. No! Enthralment
flings
Its charm about thee like a poet's rage.

of a Violinist ❧

Thou hast no sex; but, in an elfish way,
Thou dost entwine in one, as in a
troth,

The gleesome thoughts of man and
maiden both.

The voice is fullest at the flush of day,
But after midnight there is much to say
In weird remembrance of an April oath.

And when the moon is seated on the
throne
Of some white cloud, with her attend-
ants near —

The wondering stars that hold her
name in fear —

Oh! then I know that mine Amati's
tone

Is all for me, and that he stands alone,
First of his tribe, belov'd without a
peer.

✻ Love Letters

Yea, this is so, my Lady! A fair form
Made of the garner'd relics of a tree,
In which of old a dryad of the lea
Did live and die. He flourish'd in a
storm,
And learnt to warble when the days
were warm
And learnt at night the secrets of the
sea.

And now he is all mine, for my caress
And my strong bow, — an Ariel, as
it seems, —
A something sweeter than the sweet-
est dreams;
A prison'd wizard that has come to bless
And will not curse, though tortured,
more or less,
By some remembrance that athwart
him streams.

of a Violinist ❧

It is the thought of April. 'Tis the
tie

That made us one; for then the earth
was fair

With all things on 't, and summer in
the air

Tingled for thee and me. A soft
reply

Came to thy lips, and I was like to die

To hear thee make such coy confes-
sions there.

It was the dawn of love or (so I
thought)

The tender cooing of thy bosom-
bird —

The beating heart that flutter'd at a
word,

And seem'd for me alone to be so fraught

❧ Love Letters

With wants unutter'd! All my being
caught

Glamour thereat, as at a boon con-
ferr'd.

And I was lifted, in a minute's space
As nigh to Heaven as Heaven is nigh
to thee,

And in thy wistful glances I could
see

Something that seem'd a joy, and in thy
face

A splendour fit for angels in the place
Where God has named them all in
their degree.

Ah, none so blest as I, and none so
proud,

In that wild moment when a thrill
was sent

of a Violinist ❧

Right through my soul, as if from
thee it went

As flame from fire ! But this was disal-
low'd ;

And I shall sooner wear a winter
shroud

Than thou revoke my doom of banish-
ment.

LETTER THIRD

REGRETS

WHEN I did wake, to-day, a bird of
Heaven,

A wanton, woeless thing, a wandering
sprite,

Did seem to sing a song for my
delight;

And, far away, did make its holy steven
Sweeter to hear than lute-strings that are
seven;

And I did weep thereat in my despite.

O glorious sun! I thought, O gracious
king

Of all this splendour that we call the
earth!

of a Violinist ❧

For thee the lark distils his morning
worth,

But who will hear the matins that I
sing?

Who will be glad to greet me in the
spring,

Or heed the voice of one so little
worth?

Who will accept the thanks I would
entone

For having met thee? and for having
seen

Thy face an instant in the bower
serene

Of perfect faith? The splendour was
thine own,

The rapture mine; and Doubt was over-
thrown,

❧ Love Letters

And Grief forgot the key-note of its
threne.

I rose in haste. I seiz'd, as in a trance,
My violin, the friend I love the best
(After thyself, sweet soul!) and
wildly press'd,
And firmly drew it, with a master's
glance,
Straight to my heart! The sunbeams
seem'd to dance
Athwart the strings, to rob me of my
rest.

For then a living thing it did appear,
And every chord had sympathies for
me;
And something like a lover's lowly
plea
Did shake its frame, and something like
a tear

of a Violinist ❀

Fell on my cheek, to mind me of the
year

When first we met, we two, beside
the sea.

I stood erect, I proudly lifted up

The Sword of Song, the bow that
trembled now,

As if for joy, my grief to disallow. —

Are there not some who, in the choicest
cup,

Imbibe despair, and famish as they sup,
Sear'd by a solace that was like a
vow?

Are there not some who weep, and can-
not tell

Why it is thus? And others who
repeat

Stories of ice, to cool them in the
heat?

❧ Love Letters

And some who quake for doubts they
cannot quell,
And yet are brave? And some who
smile in Hell
For thinking of the sin that was so
sweet?

I have been one who, in the glow of
youth,
Have liv'd in books, and realized a
bliss
Unfelt by misers, when they count
and kiss
Their minted joys; and I have known,
in sooth,
The taste of water from the well of
Truth,
And found it good. But time has
alter'd this.

of a Violinist ❧

I have been hated, scorn'd, and thrust
away,

By one who is the Regent of the
flowers,

By one who, in the magic of her
powers,

Changes the day to night, the night to
day,

And makes a potion of the solar ray

Which drugs my heart, and deadens
it for hours.

I have been taught that Happiness is
coy,

And will not come to all who bend
the knee;

That Faith is like the foam upon the
sea,

And Pride a snare, and Pomp a foolish
toy,

✻ Love Letters

And Hope a moth, whose wings we may
destroy;

And she I love has taught these
things to me.

Yes, thou, my Lady! Thou hast made
me feel

The pangs of that Prometheus who
was chain'd

And would not bow, but evermore
maintain'd

A fierce revolt. Have I refused to
kneel?

I do it gladly. But to mine appeal

No answer comes, and none will be
ordain'd.

Why, then, this rancour? Why so cold
a thing

As thy displeasure, O thou dearest
One?

of a Violinist ❧

I meant no wrong. I stole not from
the sun
The fire of Heaven; but I did seek to
bring
Glory from thee to me; and in the
Spring
I pray'd the prayer that left me thus
undone.

I pray'd my prayer. I wove into my
song
Fervour, and joy, and mystery, and the
bleak,
The wan despair that words can never
speak.
I pray'd as if my spirit did belong
To some old master, who was wise and
strong
Because he lov'd, and suffer'd, and
was weak.

❧ Love Letters

I curb'd the notes, convulsive, to a sigh,
And, when they falter'd most, I made
them leap

Fierce from my bow, as from a summer sleep

A young she-devil. I was fired thereby
To bolder efforts, and a muffled cry

Came from the strings, as if a saint
did weep.

I changed the theme. I dallied with
the bow

Just time enough to fit it to a mesh
Of merry notes, and drew it back
afresh

To talk of truth and constancy and woe,
And life, and love, and madness, and
the glow

Of mine own soul which burns into
my flesh.

of a Violinist ❀

It was the Lord of music, it was he
Who seiz'd my hand. He forced me,
as I play'd,
To think of that ill-fated fairy-glade
Where once we stroll'd at night; and
wild and free
My notes did ring; and quickly unto
me
There came the joy that maketh us
afraid.

Oh! I shall die of tasting in my dreams
Poison of love and ecstasy of pain;
For I shall never kneel to thee again,
Or sit in bowers, or wander by the
streams
Of golden vales, or of the morning
beams
Construct a wreath to crown thee on
the plain!

✻ Love Letters

Yet it were easy, too, to compass this,
So thou wert kind; and easy to my
soul
Were harder things if I could reach
the goal
Of all I crave, and consummate a bliss
In mine own fashion, and compel a kiss
More fraught with honour than a
king's control.

It is not much to say that I would
die, —
It is not much to say that I would
dare
Torture, and doom, and death, could
I but share
One kiss with thee. For then, without a
sigh,
I'd teach thee pity, and be graced
thereby,

of a Violinist ❧

Wet with thy tears, and shrouded by
thy hair.

It is not much to say that this is so ;

Yet I would sell my substance and my
breath,

And all the joy that comes from
Nazareth,

And all the peace that all the angels
know,

To lie with thee, one minute, in the
snow

Of thy white bosom, ere I sank in
death!

LETTER FOURTH

YEARNINGS

THE earth is glad, I know, when night
is spent,

For then she wakes the birdlings in
the bowers;

And, one by one, the rosy-footed
hours

Start for the race; and from crimson
tent

The soldier-sun looks o'er the firament;
And all his path is strewn with festal
flowers.

But what his mission? What the happy
quest

Of all this toil? He journeys on his
way

of a Violinist ❧

As Cæsar did, unbiass'd by the sway
Of maid or man. His goal is in the
west.

Will he unbuckle there, and, in his rest,
Dream of the gods who died in Nero's
day?

Will he arraign the traitor in his camp?
The Winter Comet who, with
streaming hair,
Attack'd the sweetest of the Pleiads
fair

And ravish'd her, and left her in the
damp
Of dull decay, nor re-illumed the lamp
That show'd the place she occupied
in air.

No; 'tis not so! He seeks his lady-
moon,

❖ Love Letters

The gentle orb for whom Endymion
sigh'd,
And trusts to find her by the ocean
tide,
Or near a forest in the coming June;
For he has lov'd her since she late did
swoon
In that eclipse of which she nearly
died.

He knew her then; he knew her in the
glow
Of all her charms. He knew that she
was chaste,
And that she wore a girdle at her
waist
Whiter than pearl. And when he eyed
her so
He knew that in the final overthrow

of a Violinist ❧

He should prevail, and she should be
embraced.

But were I minded thus, were I the
sun,

And thou the moon, I would not
bide so long

To hear the marvels of thy wedding-
song;

For I would have the planets, every one,
Conduct thee home, before the day was
done,

And call thee queen, and crown thee
in the throng.

And, like Apollo, I would flash on thee,
And rend thy veil, and call thee by
the name

That Daphne lov'd, the loadstar of
his fame;

❖ Love Letters

And make myself for thee as white to
see

As whitest marble, and as wildly free
As Leda's lover with his look of flame.

And there should then be fêtes that
should not cease

Till I had kiss'd thee, lov'd one! in
a trance

Lasting a lifetime, through a life's
romance;

And every star should have a mate
apiece,

And I would teach them how, in ancient
Greece,

The gods were masters of the maidens'
dance.

I should be bold to act; and thou
should'st feel

of a Violinist ❧

Terror and joy combined, in all the
span

Of thy sweet body, ere my fingers ran
From curl to curl, to prompt thee how
to kneel;

And then, soul-stricken by thy mute
appeal,

I should be quick to answer like a
man.

What! have I sinn'd, dear Lady? have
I sinn'd

To talk so wildly? Have I sinn'd
in this?

An angel's mouth was surely meant
to kiss!

Or have I dreamt of courtship out in
Inde

In some wild wood? My soul is fever-
thinn'd,

❧ Love Letters

And fierce and faint, and frauded of
its bliss.

I will not weep. I will not in the night
Weep or lament, or, bending on my
knees,
Appeal for pity! In the clustered
trees

The wind is boasting of its one delight;
And I will boast of mine, in thy despite,
And say I love thee more than all of
these.

The rose in bloom, the linnet as it sings,
The fox, the fawn, the cygnet on the
mere,
The dragon-fly that glitters like a
spear, —
All these, and more, all these ecstatic
things,

of a Violinist ❧

Possess their mates; and some arrive on
wings,

And some on webs, to make their
meanings clear.

Yea, all these things, and more than I
can tell,

More than the most we know of, one
and all,

Do talk of Love. There is no other
call

From wind to wave, from rose to aspho-
del,

Than Love's alone — the things we can-
not quell,

Do what we will, from font to
funeral.

What have I done, I only on the earth,
That I should wait a century for a
word?

❧ Love Letters

A hundred years, I know, have been
deferr'd
Since last we met, and then it was in
dearth
Of gladsome peace; for, in a moment's
girth,
My shuddering soul was wounded
like a bird.

I knew thy voice. I knew the veering
sound
Of that sweet oracle which once did
tend
To treat me grandly, as we treat a
friend;
And I would know 't if darkly under-
ground
I lay as dead, or, down among the
drown'd,
I blindly stared, unvalued to the end.

of a Violinist ❧

There! take again the kiss I took from
thee

Last night in sleep. I met thee in a
dream

And drew thee closer than a monk
may deem

Good for the soul. I know not how it
be,

But this I know: if God be good to me
I shall be raised again to thine es-
teem.

I touched thy neck. I kiss'd it. I was
bold.

And bold am I to-day, to call to
mind

How, in the night, a murmur not un-
kind,

Broke on mine ear; a something new
and old

✽ Love Letters

Quick in thy breath, as when a tale is
told

Of some great hope with madness in-
tertwined.

And round my lips, in joy and yet in
fear,

There seemed to dart the stings of
kisses warm.

These were my honey-bees, and soon
would swarm

To choose their queen. But ere they
did appear,

I heard again that murmur in mine ear
Which seem'd to speak of calm before
a storm.

“What is it, love?” I whispered in
my sleep,

And turned to thee, as April unto
May.

of a Violinist ❧

“Art mine in truth, mine own, by
night and day,
Now and for ever?” And I heard thee
weep,
And then persuade; and then my soul
did leap
Swiftly to thine, in love’s ecstatic
sway.

I fondled thee! I drew thee to my
heart,
Well knowing in the dark that joy
is dumb.
And then a cry, a sigh, a sob, did
come
Forth from thy lips. . . . I waken’d,
with a start,
To find thee gone. The day had taken
part
Against the total of my blisses’ sum.

LETTER FIFTH

CONFESSIONS

O LADY mine! O Lady of my Life!

Mine and not mine, a being of the
sky

Turn'd into Woman, and I know not
why —

Is't well, bethink thee, to maintain a
strife

With thy poor servant? War unto the
knife,

Because I greet thee with a lover's
eye?

Is't well to visit me with thy disdain,
And rack my soul, because, for love
of thee,

I was too prone to sink upon my knee,

of a Violinist ❀

And too intent to make my meaning
plain,

And too resolved to make my loss a gain
To do thee good, by Love's immortal
plea?

O friend! forgive me for my dream of
bliss.

Forgive: forget; be just! Wilt not
forgive?

Not though my tears should fall, as
through a sieve

The salt sea-sand? What joy hast thou
in this:

To be a maid, and marvel at a kiss?

Say! Must I die, to prove that I can
live?

Shall this be so? E'en this? And all
my love

❖ Love Letters

Wreck'd in an instant? No, a gentle
heart
Beats in thy bosom; and the shades
depart
From all fair gardens, and from skies
above,
When thou art near. For thou art like
a dove,
And dainty thoughts are with thee
where thou art.

Oh! it is like the death of dearest kin,
To wake and find the fancies of the
brain
Sear'd and confused. We languish
in the strain
Of some lost music, and we find within,
Deep in the heart, a record of a sin,
The thrill thereof, and all the bliss-
ful pain.

of a Violinist ❀

For it is deadly sin to love too well,
And unappeased, unhonour'd, unbe-
sought,
To feed on dreams; and yet 'tis aptly
thought
That all must love. E'en those who
most rebel
In Eros' camp have known his master-
spell;
And more shall learn than Eros yet
has taught.

But I am mad to love. I am not wise.
I am the worst of men to love the
best
Of all sweet women! An untimely
jest,
A thing made up of rhapsodies and
sighs,

❖ Love Letters

And unordained on earth, and in the
 skies,
And undesired in tumult and in rest.

All this is true. I know it. I am he.
 I am that man. I am the hated
 friend

Who once received a smile, and
 sought to mend
His soul with hope. O tyrant! by the
 plea
Of all thy grace, do thou accept from me
 At least the notes that know not to
 offend.

See! I will strike again the major chord
 Of that great song, which in his early
 days,
Beethoven wrote; and thine shall be
 the praise,

of a Violinist ❧

And thine the frenzy like a soldier's
sword

Flashing therein; and thine, O thou
adored

And bright true Lady! all the poet's
lays.

To thee, to thee, the songs of all my joy,
To thee the songs that wildly seem to
bless,

And those that mind thee of a past
caress.

Lo! with a whisper to the Wingèd Boy
Who rules my fate, I will my strength
employ

To make a matin-song of my distress.

But playing thus, and toying with the
notes,

I half forget the cause I have to
weep;

❧ Love Letters

And, like a reaper in the realms of
sleep,
I hear the bird of morning where he
floats
High in the welkin and in fairy boats
I see the minstrels sail upon the
deep.

In mid-suspension of my leaping bow
I almost hear the silence of the night;
And, in my soul, I know the stars
are bright
Because they love, and that they
nightly glow
To make it clear that there is nought
below,
And nought above, so fair as Love's
delight.

But shall I touch thy heart by speech
alone,

of a Violinist ❧

Without Amati? Shall I prove, by
words,

That hope is meant for men as well
as birds;

That I would take a scorpion, or a
stone,

In lieu of gold, and sacrifice a throne
To be the keeper of thy flocks and
herds?

Ah no, my Lady! though I sang to
thee

With fuller voice than sings the
nightingale —

Fuller and softer in the moonlight
pale

Than lays of Keats, or Shelley, or the
free

And fire-lipp'd Byron — there would
come to me

✻ Love Letters

No word of thine to thank me for
the tale.

Thou would'st not heed. Thou would'st
not any-when,
In bower or grove — or in the holy
nook
Which shields thy bed — thou
would'st not care to look
For thoughts of mine, though faithful
in their ken
As are the minds of England's fighting
men
When they inscribe their names in
Honour's book.

Thou would'st not care to scan my face,
and through
This face of mine, the soul, for scraps
of thought.

of a Violinist ❧

Yet 'tis a face that somewhere has been
taught
To smile in tears. Mine eyes are some-
what blue
And quick to flash (if what I hear be
true)
And dark, at times, as velvet newly
wrought.

But wilt thou own it? Wilt thou in
the scroll
Of my sad life, perceive, as in a hive,
A thousand happy fancies that con-
trive
To seek thee out? Thy bosom is the
goal
Of all my thoughts, and quick to thy
control
They wend their way, elate to be
alive.

❖ Love Letters

But there is something I could never
bring
My soul to compass. No! could I
compel
Thy plighted troth, I would not have
thee tell
A lie to God. I'll have no wedding-
ring
With loveless hands around my neck to
cling;
For this were worse than all the fires
of hell.

I would not take thee from a lover's
lips,
Or from the rostrum of a roaring
crowd,
Or from the memory of a husband's
shroud,
Or from the goblet where a Cæsar sips.

of a Violinist ❧

I would not touch thee with my finger-
tips,

But I would die to serve thee, — and
be proud.

And could I enter Heaven, and find
therein,

In all the wide dominions of the air,
No trace of thee among the natives
there,

I would not bide with them — No! not
to win

A seraph's lyre — but I would sin a sin,
And free my soul, and seek thee
otherwhere!

LETTER SIXTH

DESPAIR

I AM undone. My hopes have beggar'd
me,

For I have lov'd where loving was
denied.

To-day is dark, and Yesterday has
died,

And when To-morrow comes, erect and
free,

Like some great king, whose tyrant will
he be,

And whose defender in the days of
pride ?

I am not cold, and yet November bands
Compress my heart. I know the
month is May,

of a Violinist ❀

And that the sun will warm me if I
stay.

But who is this ? Oh, who is this that
stands

Straight in my path, and with his bony
hands

Appeals to me to turn some other
way?

It is the phantom of my murder'd joy,
Which once again has come to perse-
cute,

And tell me the tales which late I did
refute.

But lo! I now must heed them, as a
boy

Takes up, in tears, the remnants of a toy,
Or bard forlorn the fragments of a
lute.

✻ Love Letters

It is the ghost that, day by day, did come
To tempt my spirit to the mountain-
peak;

It is the thing that wept, and would
not speak,

And, with a sign, to show that it was
dumb,

Did seem to hint at Death that was the
sum

Of all we know, and all we strive to
seek.

And now it comes again, and with its eye
Bloodshot and blear, though pallid in
its face,

Doth point, exacting, to the very place
Where I do keep, that no one may descry,
A lady's glove, a ribbon, and a dry,

A perjur'd rose, which oft I did em-
brace.

of a Violinist ❧

It means, perchance, that I must make
an end

Of all these things, and burn them as
a fee

To my Despair, when down upon my
knee.

O piteous thing! have pity; be my
friend;

Or say, at least, that blessings will
descend

On her I love, on her if not on me!

The Shape did smile; and, wildly, with
a start,

Did shrivel up, as when a fire is spent,
Whereof the smoke obscured the firm-
ament.

And then I knew it had but tried my
heart,

To teach me how to play a manly part,

✻ Love Letters

And strengthen me in all my good intent.

And here I stand alone, e'en like a leaf
In sudden frost, as quiet as the wing
Of wounded bird, which knows it cannot sing.

A child may moan, but not a mountain chief.

If we be sad, if we possess a grief,
The grief should be the slave, and not the king.

Yes, I will pause, and pluck from out the Past

The full discernment of my sorry cheer,

And why the sunlight seems no longer clear,

And why, in spite of anguish, and the vast,

of a Violinist ❧

The sickly blank that o'er my life is cast,
I cannot kneel to-day, or shed a tear.

It was thy friendship. It was this I
had,

This and no more. I was a fool to
doubt,

I was a fool to strive to put to rout
My many foes: — thy musings tender-
glad,

Which all had said: — “ Avoid him! he
is mad —

Mad with his love, and Love's erratic
shout.”

I should have known, — I should have
guess'd in time, —

That, like a soft mirage at twilight
hour,

My dream would melt, and rob me of
its dower.

✻ Love Letters

I should have guess'd that all the heights
 sublime,
Which look'd like spires and cities built
 in rhyme,
 Would droop and die, like petals from
 a flower.

I should have known, indeed, that to the
 brave
 All things are servants. But my lost
 Delight
 Was like the ship that founders in a
 night,
And leaves no mark. How then? Is
 Passion's grave
All that is left beside the sobbing wave?
 The foam thereof, the saltness, and
 the blight?

I had a fleet of ships, and where are
 they?

of a Violinist ❀

Where are they all? and where the
merchandise
I treasured once — an empire's golden
prize,
The empire of a soul, which, in a day,
Lost all its wealth? I was deceiv'd, I
say,
For I had reckon'd on propitious skies.

I look'd afar, and saw no sign of wrack.
I look'd anear, and felt the summer
breeze
Warm on my cheek; and forth upon
the seas
I sent my ships; and would not have
them back,
Though some averr'd a storm was on the
track
Of all I lov'd, and all I own'd of
these.

❖ Love Letters

One ship was "Joy," the second
"Truth," the third
"Love in a Dream," and, last not
least of all,
"Hope," and "Content," and "Pride
that hath a Fall."
And they were goodly vessels, by my
word,
With sails as strong as pinions of a bird,
And crew that answer'd well to
Duty's call.

In one of these — in "Hope" — where
I did fly
A lofty banner, — in this ship I
found
Doom's-day at last, and all my crew
were drown'd.
Yes, I was wreck'd in this, and here I
lie,

of a Violinist ❀

Here on the beach, forlorn and like to
die,
With none to pray for me on holy
ground.

O sweet my Lady! If thou pass this
way,
And thou behold me where I lie beset
By wind and wave, and powerless to
forget,

Wilt not approach me thoughtfully and
say: —

“This man was true. He lov’d me
night and day
And though I spurn’d at him, he loves
me yet.”

Wilt not withhold thy blame, at least
to-night,
And shed for me a tear, as one may
grieve

❧ Love Letters

For people known in books, for men
who weave
Ropes out of sand, to lead them to the
light?
Oh! treat me thus, and, by thy hand so
white,
I will forego the dreams to which I
cleave.

Be just to me, and say, when all is o'er,
When some such book is calmly laid
aside:
“The shadow-men have liv'd and
lov'd and died;
The shadow-women will be vexed no
more.
But there is One for whom my heart is
sore,
Because he took a shadow for his
guide.”

of a Violinist ❀

Say only this; but pray for me withal,
And let a pitying thought possess thee
then,

Whether at home, at sea, or in a glen
In some wild nook. It were a joy to fall
Dead at thy feet, as at a trumpet's call,
For I should then be peerless among
men!

LETTER SEVENTH

HOPE

O TEARS of mine! Ye start I know not
why,
Unless, indeed, to prove that I am
glad,
Albeit fast wedded to a thought so
sad
I scarce can deem that my despair will
die,
Or that the sun, careering up the sky,
Will warm again a world that seem'd
so mad.

And yet, who knows ? The world is, to
the mind,
Much as we make it; and the things
we tend

of a Violinist ❀

Wear, for the nonce, the liveries that
we lend.

And some such things are fair, though
ill-defined,

And some are scathing, like the wintry
wind;

And some begin, and some will never
end.

How can I think, ye tears! that I have
been

The thing I was — so doubting, so
unfit,

And so unblest, with brows for ever
knit,

And hair unkempt, and face becoming
lean

And cold and pale, as if I late had seen
Medusa's head, and all the scowls of
it ?

❧ Love Letters

Oh, why is this ? Oh, why have I so
long

Brooded on grief, and made myself a
bane

To golden fields and all the happy
plain

Where once I met the Lady of my
Song,

The lady for whose sake I shall be
strong,

But never weak or diffident again?

I was too shorn of hope. I did em-
ploy

Words like a mourner; and to Her I
bow'd,

As one might kneel to Glory in its
shroud.

But I am crown'd to-day, and not so
coy —

of a Violinist ❧

Crown'd with a kiss, and sceptred with a
joy;
And all the world shall see that I am
proud.

I shall be sated now. I shall receive
More than the guerdon of my wildest
thought,
More than the most that ecstasy has
taught
To saints in Heaven; and more than
poets weave
In madcap verse, to warn us, or deceive;
And more than Adam knew ere Eve
was brought.

I know the meaning now of all the signs,
And all the joys I dreamt of in my
dreams.
I realize the comfort of the streams

❖ Love Letters

When they reflect the shadows of the
pines.

I know that there is hope for celan-
dines,

And that a tree is merrier than it
seems.

I know the mighty hills have much
to tell;

And that they quake, at times, in
undertone,

And talk to stars, because so much
alone

And so unlov'd. I know that, in the
dell,

Flowers are betroth'd, and that a wed-
ding-bell

Rings in the breeze on which a moth
has flown.

of a Violinist ❧

I know such things, because to loving
 hearts
Nature is keen, and pleasures, long de-
 lay'd,
Quicken the pulse, and turn a truant
 shade
Into a sprite, equipp'd with all the darts
That once were Cupid's; and the day de-
 parts,
And sun and moon conjoin, as man
 with maid.

The lover knows how grand a thing is
 love,
How grand, how sweet a thing, and
 how divine
More than the pouring out of choicest
 wine;
More than the whiteness of the whitest
 dove;

❧ Love Letters

More than the glittering of the stars
above;
And such a love, O Love! is thine and
mine.

To me the world, to-day, has grown so
fair
I dare not trust myself to think of it.
Visions of light around me seem to flit,
And Phœbus loosens all his golden hair
Right down the sky; and daisies turn and
stare
At things we see not with our human
wit.

And here, beside me, there are mosses
green
In shelter'd nooks, and gnats in bright
array,
And lordly beetles out for holiday;

of a Violinist ❧

And spiders small that work in silver
sheen

To make a kirtle for the Fairy Queen,
That she may don it on the First of
May.

I hear, in thought, I hear the very
words

That Arethusa, turn'd into a brook,
Spoke to Diana, when her leave she
took

Of all she lov'd — low-weeping as the
birds

Shrill'd out of tune, and all the
frightened herds

Scamper'd to death, in spite of pipe
and crook.

I know, to-day, why winds are made to
sigh

❖ Love Letters

And why they hide themselves, and
why they gloat
In some old ruin! Mote confers with
mote,
And shell with shell; and corals live and
die,
And die and live, below the deep. And
why ?
To make a necklace for my lady's
throat.

And yet the world, in all its varied
girth,
Lacks what we look for. There is
something base
In mere existence — something in the
face
Of men and women which accepts the
earth,
And all its havings, as its right of birth,

of a Violinist ❀

But not its quittance, not its resting-
place.

There have been moments, at the set of
sun,

When I have long'd for wings upon
the wind,

That I might seek a planet to my
mind,

More full-develop'd than this present
one;

With more of scope, when all is said and
done,

To satisfy the wants of human kind.

A world with thee, a home in some
remote

And unknown region, which no sage's
ken

Has compass'd yet; of which no
human pen

❖ Love Letters

Has traced the limits; where no terrors
float
In wind or wave, and where the soul
may note
A thousand raptures unreveal'd to
men.

To be transported in a magic car,
On some transcendent night in early
June,
Beyond the horn'd projections of the
moon;
To have our being in a bridal star,
In lands of light, where only angels are,
Athwart the spaces where the comets
swoon.

To be all this: to have in our estate
Worlds without stint, and quit them
for the clay

of a Violinist ❀

Of some new planets where a summer's day
Lasts fifty years; and there to celebrate
Our Golden Wedding, by the will of
Fate —
This were a subject for a seraph's lay.

This were a life to live, — a life indeed, —
A thing to die for; if, in truth, we die
When we but put our mortal vestments by.

This were a climax for a lover's need
Sweeter than songs, and holier than the
creed
Of half the zealots who have sought
the sky.

LETTER EIGHTH

A VISION

YES, I will tell thee what, a week ago,
I dreamt of thee, and all the joy
therein

Which I conceiv'd, and all the holy
din

Of throbbing music, which appear'd to
flow

From room to room, as if to make me
know

The power thereof to lead me out of
sin.

Methought I saw thee in a ray of light,
This side a grove — a dream within
a dream —

of a Violinist ❀

With eyes of tender pleading, and the
gleam
Of far-off summers in thy tresses bright;
And I did tremble at the gracious sight,
As one who sees a naiad in a stream.

I follow'd thee. I knew that, in the
wood,
Where thus we met, there was a tryst-
ing-place.

I follow'd thee, as mortals in a chase
Follow the deer. I knew that it was
good
To track thy step, and promptly under-
stood
The fitful blush that flutter'd to thy
face.

I followed thee to where a brook did
run

❖ Love Letters

Close to a grot; and there I knelt to
thee.

And then a score of birds flew over
me, —

Birds which arrived because the day was
done,

To sing the Sanctus of the setting sun;
And then I heard thy voice upon the
lea.

“ Follow! ” it cried. I rose and follow’d
fast;

And, in my dream, I felt the dream
was true,

And that, full soon, Titania, with her
crew

Of imps and fays, would meet me on the
blast.

But this was hindered; and I quickly
passed

of a Violinist ❧

Into the valley where the cedars
grew.

And what a scene, O God! and what
repose,

And what sad splendour in the burn-
ing west:

A languid sun low-dropping to his
rest,

And incense rising, as of old it rose,

To do him honour at the daylight's
close, —

The birds entranced, and all the winds
repress'd.

I followed thee. I came to where a
shrine

Stood in the trees, and where an oaken
gate

Swung in the air, so turbulent of late.

❧ Love Letters

I touch'd thy hand; it quiver'd into
mine;
And then I look'd into thy face benign,
And saw the smile for which the
angels wait.

And lo! the moon had sailed into the
main
Of that blue sky, as if therein did
poise
A silver boat; and then a tuneful
noise
Broke from the copse where late a breeze
was slain;
And nightingales, in ecstasy of pain,
Did break their hearts with singing
the old joys.

"Is this the spot?" I cried, "is this the
spot

of a Violinist ❀

Where I must tell thee all my heart's
desire?

Is this the time when I must drink the
fire,

And eat the snow, and find it fever-hot?
I freeze with heat, and yet I fear it
not;

And all my pulses thrill me like a
lyre."

A wondrous light was thrown upon thy
face;

It was the light within; it was the
ray

Of thine own soul. And then a voice
did say,

"Glory to God the King, and Jesu's
grace

Here and hereafter!" And about the
place

❖ Love Letters

A radiance shone surpassing that of
day.

It was thy voice. It was the voice I
prize

More than the sound of April in the
dales,

More than the songs of larks and
nightingales,

And more than teachings of the worldly-
wise.

“Glory to God,” it said, “for, in the
skies,

And here on earth, ’tis He alone
prevails.”

And then I asked thee: “Shall I tell
thee now

All that I think of, when, by land and
sea,

of a Violinist ❀

The days and nights illumine the world
for me?

And how I muse on marriage, as I
bow

In God's own places, with a throbbing
brow?

And how, at night, I dream of kissing
thee? "

But thou did'st answer: " First behold
this man!

He is thy lord, for love's and lady's
sake;

He is thy master, or I much mistake."

And I perceiv'd, hard by, a phantom
wan

And wild and kingly, who did, walking,
span

The open space that lay beside the
brake.

✻ Love Letters

It was Beethoven. It was he who
came
From monstrous shades, to journey yet
awhile
In pleasant nooks, and vainly seek the
smile
Of one lov'd woman — she to whom his
fame
Had been a glory had she sought the
same,
And lov'd a soul so grand, so free
from guile.

It was the Kaiser of the land of song,
The giant-singer who did storm the
gates
Of Heaven and Hell, a man to whom
the Fates
Were fierce as furies, and who suffer'd
wrong

of a Violinist ❧

And ached and bore it, and was brave
and strong,
But gaunt as ocean when its rage
abates.

I knew his tread. I knew him by his
look
Of pent-up sorrow — by his hair un-
kempt
And torn attire — and by his smile
exempt
From all but pleading. Yet his body
shook
With some great joy; and onward he
betook
His echoing steps the way that I had
dreamt.

I bow'd my head. The lordly being
pass'd.

He was my king, and I did bow to
him.

And when I rais'd mine eyes they were
as dim

As tears could make them. And the
moon, aghast,

Glared in the sky; and westward came a
blast

Which shook the earth like shouts of
cherubim.

I held my breath. I could have fled
the place,

As men have fled before the wrath of
God,

But I beheld my Lady where she
trod

The darken'd path; and I did cry apace:
" Help me, my Lady! " and thy lustrous
face

of a Violinist ❧

Gladden'd the air, and quicken'd all
the sod.

Then did I hear again that voice of
cheer.

"Lovest thou me," it said, "or music
best?"

I seized thy hand, I drew thee to my
breast.

"Thee, only thee!" I cried. "From
year to year,

Thee, only thee — not fame!" And
silver-clear,

Thy voice responded: "God will
grant the rest."

I kiss'd thine eyes. I kiss'd them where
the blue

Peep'd smiling forth; and proudly as
before

✻ Love Letters

I heard the tones that thrill'd me to
the core.

"If thou love me," they said, "if thou
be true,

Thou shalt have fame, and love, and
music too!"

Entranced I kiss'd the lips that I
adore.

LETTER NINTH

TO - MORROW

O LOVE! O Love! O Gateway of De-
light!

Thou porch of peace, thou pageant of
the prime

Of all God's creatures! I am here to
climb

Thine upward steps, and daily and by
night

To gaze beyond them, and to search
aright

The far-off splendour of thy track
sublime.

For, in thy precincts, on the further side,
Beyond the turret where the bells are
rung,

✻ Love Letters

Beyond the chapel where the rites
are sung,
There is a garden fit for any bride.
O Love! by thee, by thee are sanctified
The joys thereof to keep our spirits
young.

By thee, dear Love! by thee, if all be
well —

And we be wise enough to own the
touch

Of some bright folly that has thrill'd
us much —

By thee, till death, we may regain the
spell

Of wizard Merlin, and in every dell

Confront a Muse, and bow to it as
such.

Love! Happy Love! Behold me where
I stand

of a Violinist ❧

This side thy portal, with my strain-
ing eyes
Turn'd to the Future. Cloudless are
the skies,
And, far adown the road which thou hast
spann'd,
I see the groves of that elected land
Which is the place I call my paradise.

But what is this? The plains are known
to me;
The hills are known, the fields, the
little fence,
The noisy brook as clear as innocence,
And this old oak, the wonder of the
lea,
Which stops the wind to know if there
shall be
Sorrow for men, or pride, or recom-
pense.

❧ Love Letters

I know these things, yet hold it little
blame

To know them not, though in their
proud array,

The flowers advance to make the
world so gay.

Ah, what a change! The things I know
by name

Look unfamiliar all, and, like a flame,
The roses burn upon the hedge to-day.

The grass is velvet. There are pearls
thereon,

And golden signs, and braid that doth
appear

Made for a bridal. This is fairy gear
If I mistake not. I shall know anon.

Nature herself will teach me how to con
The new-found words to thank the
glowing year.

of a Violinist ❧

This is the path that led me to the
brook;

And this the mead and this the
mossy slope,

And this the place where breezes did
elope

With giddy moths, enamour'd of a look;

And here I sat alone, or with a book,

Dreaming the dreams of constancy and
hope.

I loved the river well; but not till now

Did I perceive the marvels of the
shore.

This is a cave, and this an emerald
floor;

And here Sir Eglantine might make a
vow,

And here a king, a guilty king, might
bow

Before a child, and break his word no
more.

The day is dying. I shall see him die,
And I shall watch the sunset, and the
red
Of all that splendour when the day is
dead.
And I shall see the stars upon the sky,
And think them torches that are lit on
high
To light the Lord Apollo to his bed.

And sweet To-morrow, like a golden
bark,
Will call for me, and lead me on apace
To where I shall behold, in all her
grace,
Mine own true Lady, whom a happy
lark

of a Violinist ❀

Did late salute, appointing, after dark,
A nightingale to carol in his place.

Oh, come to me! Oh, come, beloved
day,

O sweet To-morrow! Youngest of
the sons

Of old King Time, to whom Creation
runs

As men to God. Oh, quickly with thy
ray

Anoint my head, and teach me how to
pray,

As gentle Jesus taught the little ones.

I am aweary of the waiting hours,

I am aweary of the tardy night,

The hungry moments rob me of de-
light,

The crawling minutes steal away my
powers;

And I am sick at heart, as one who
 cowers,
In lonely haunts, remov'd from human
 sight.

How shall I think the night was meant
 for sleep,
When I must count the dreadful hours
 thereof,
And cannot beat them down, or bid
 them doff
Their hateful masks? A man may wake
 and weep
From hour to hour, and, in the silence
 deep,
See shadows move, and almost hear
 them scoff.

Oh, come to me, To-morrow! like a
 friend,

of a Violinist ❧

And not as one who bideth for the
clock.

Be swift to come, and I will hear
thee knock,

And though the night refuse to make an
end

Of her dull peace, I promptly will
descend

And let thee in, and thank thee for the
shock.

Dear, good To-morrow! in my life, till
now,

I did not think to need thee quite so
soon.

I did not think that I should hate the
moon,

Or new or old, or that my fevered
brow

Requir'd the sun to cool it. I will bow

To this new day, that he may grant
the boon.

Yes, 'twill consent. The day will dawn
at last.

Day and the tide approach. They
cannot rest.

They must approach. They must by
every test

Of all men's knowledge, neither slow
nor fast,

Approach and front us. When the night
is past,

The morrow's dawn will lead me to
my quest.

Then shall I tremble greatly, and be
glad,

For I shall meet my true-love all
alone,

of a Violinist ❧

And none shall tell me of her dainty
zone,
And none shall say how sweetly she is
clad;
But I shall know it. Men may call me
mad;
But I shall know how bright the
world has grown.

There is a grammar of the lips and
eyes,
And I have learnt it. There are
tokens sure
Of trust in love; and I have found
them pure.
Is love the guerdon then? Is love the
prize?
It is! It is! We find it in the skies,
And here on earth 'tis all that will
endure.

❧ Love Letters

All things for love. All things in some
divine

And wish'd for way, conspire, as Na-
ture knows,

To some great good. Where'er a
daisy grows

There grows a joy. The forest-trees
combine

To talk of peace when mortals would
repine;

And he is false to God who flouts the
rose.

LETTER TENTH

A RETROSPECT

I WALK again beside the roaring sea,
And once again I harken to the speech
Of waves exulting on the madden'd
beach.

A sound of awful joy it seems to me,
A shuddering sound of God's eternity, —
Telling of things beyond the sage's
reach.

I walk alone. I see the bounding waves
Curl'd into foam. I watch them as
they leap
Like wild sea-horses loosen'd from
the deep.
And well I know that they have seen
the graves

Of shipwreck'd sailors; for Disaster
paves

The fearful fields where reapers
cannot reap.

Out there, in islands where the summer
sun

Goes down in tempest, there are loath-
some things

That crawl to shore, and flap un-
sightly wings.

But here there are no monsters that can
run

To catch the limbs of bathers; no!
not one;

And here the wind is harmless when
it stings.

There is a glamour all about the bay,
As if the nymphs of Greece had tar-
ried here.

of a Violinist ❧

The sands are golden, and the rocks
appear
Crested with silver; and the breezes play
Snatches of song they hummed when far
away,
And then are hush'd, as if from sudden
fear.

They think of thee. They hunt; they
meditate.

They will not quit the shore till they
have seen

The very spot where thou did'st stand
serene

In all thy beauty; and of me they
prate,

Knowing I love thee. And, like one
elate,

The grand old sea remembers what
hath been.

❧ Love Letters

How many hours, how many days we
met

Here on the beach, in that delirious
time

When all the waves appear'd to
break in rhyme.

Life was a joy, and love was like a
debt

Paid and repaid in kisses — good to get,
And good to lose — unhoarded, yet
sublime.

We wander'd here. We saw the tide
advance,

We saw it ebb. We saw the widow'd
shore

Waiting for Ocean with its organ
roar,

Knowing that, day by day, through
happy chance,

of a Violinist ❧

She would be wooed anew, amid the
dance

Of bridal waves, high-bounding as be-
fore.

And I remember how, at flush of morn,
Thou did'st depart alone, to find a
nook

Where none could see thee; where a
lover's look

Were profanation worse than any scorn;
And how I went my way, among the
corn,

To wait for thee beside the Shepherd's
brook.

And lo! from out a cave thou did'st
emerge,

Sweet as thyself, the flower of
Womankind.

✻ Love Letters

I know 'twas thus: for, in my secret
mind,
I see thee now. I see thee in the surge
Of those wild waves, well knowing that
they urge
Some idle wish, untalk'd-of to the
wind.

I think the beach was thankful to have
known
Thy warm, white body, and the
blessedness
Of thy first shiver; and I well can
guess
How, when thy limbs were toss'd and
overthrown,
The sea was pleased, and every smallest
stone,
And every wave, was proud of thy
caress.

of a Violinist ❧

A maiden diving, with dishevell'd hair,
Sheer from a rock; a syren of the deep
Call'd into action, ere a wave could
leap

Breast-high to daunt her; Daphne, by a
prayer,

Lured from a forest for the sea to
bear —

This were a dream, to fill a poet's
sleep.

This were a thing for Phœbus to have
eyed;

And he did eye it. Yea, the Deathless
One

Did eye thy beauty. It was madly
done. *

He saw thee in the rising of the tide.

He saw thee well. The truth is not de-
nied;

The shore was proud to show thee to
the sun.

Never since Venus, at a god's decree,
Uprose from ocean, has there lived on
earth

A face like thine, a form of so much
worth;

And nowhere has the moon-obeying sea
Known such perfection, down from
head to knee,

And knee to foot, since that Olympian
birth.

And, sooth, the moon was anxious to
have placed

Her head beside thee, on the waters
bright.

But she was foil'd; for thou so late
at night

of a Violinist ❧

Wouldst not go forth: no! not to be
embraced

By Nature's Queen, though, round
about the waist,

She would have ring'd thee with her
softest light.

Ah me! had I a lute of sovereign
power

I would enlarge on this, and plainly
show

That there is nothing like thee here
below, —

Nothing so comely, nothing in its dower
Of youth and grace, so like a human
flower,

And white withal, and guiltless as the
snow.

For thou art fair as lilies, with the
flush

❧ Love Letters

That roses have while waiting for a
kiss;
And when thou smilest nothing comes
amiss;
The earth is glad to see thy dimpled
blush.
Had I the lute of Orpheus I would hush
All meaner sounds to tell the stars of
this.

I would, I swear, by Pallas' own con-
sent,
Inform all creatures whom the stars
behold
That thou art mine, and that a pen
of gold,
With ink of fire, though by an angel
lent,
Were all too poor to tell my true con-
tent,

of a Violinist ❀

And how I love thee seven times
seventy fold.

And sure am I that, in the ancient days,
Achilles heard no voice so passing
sweet,

And none so trancing, none that could
compete

With thine for fervour; none in watery
ways

Where Neptune dwelt, so worthy of the
praise

Of Thetis' son, the sure and swift of
feet.

He never met upon the plains of Troy
Goddess or maiden so divinely
fraught.

Not Helen's self, for whom the Tro-
jans fought,

Was like to thee. Her love had much
alloy,
But thine has none. Her beauty was a
toy,
But thine's a gem, unsullied and un-
bought.

And ne'er was seen by poet, in a sweven,
An eye like thine, a face so fair to
see
As that which makes the sunlight
sweet to me.
Nor need I wait for death, or for the
levin
In yonder cloud, to find the path to
Heaven.
It fronts me here. 'Tis manifest in
thee!

LETTER ELEVENTH

FAITH

Now will I sing to God a song of
praise,

And thank the morning for the light
it brings,

Ay! and the earth for every flower
that springs,

And every tree that, in the jocund days,
Thrills to the blast. My voice I will
upraise

To thank the world for every bird
that sings.

I will unpack my mind of all its fears.

I will advance to where the matin
fires

Absorb the hills. My hopes and my
desires
Will lead me safe; and day will have
no tears
And night no torture, as in former
years,
To warp my nature when my soul
aspires.

I will endure. I will not strive to
peep
Behind the barriers of the days to
come,
Nor, adding up the figures of a sum,
Dispose of prayers as men dispose of
sleep.
I cannot count the stars, or walk the
deep;
But I can pray, and Faith shall not be
dumb.

of a Violinist ❧

I take myself and thee as mine estate —
Thee and myself. The world is
centred there.

If thou be well I know the skies are
fair;

If not, they press me down with leaden
weight,

And all is dark; and morning comes
too late;

And all the birds are tuneless in the
air.

I need but thee: thee only. Thou alone
Art all my joy: a something to the
sight

As grand as Silence, and as snowy
white.

And do thou pardon if I make it known,
As oft I do, with mine Amati's tone,

Amid the stillness of the starry night.

Oh, give me pity of thy heart and
mind,

Mine own sweet Lady, if I vex thee
now.

If the repeating of my constant vow
Be undesired, have pity! I were blind,
And deaf and dumb, and mad, were I
inclined

To curb my feelings when to thee I
bow.

Forgive the challenge of my longing
lips

If these offend thee; and forgive me,
too,

If I perceive, within thine eyes of
blue,

More than I utter — more than, in
eclipse,

of a Violinist ❀

A man may note atween the argent
tips

Of frightened Dian whom the Fates
pursue.

It is the thing I dream of; 'tis the
thing

We know as rapture, when, with
sudden thrill,

It snares the heart and subjugates
the will;

I mean the pride, the power, by which
we cling

To natures nobler than the ones we
bring,

To keep entire the fire we cannot chill.

Coyest of nymphs, my Lady! whom I
seek

As sailors seek salvation out at sea,

❧ Love Letters

And poets fame, and soldiers victory,
Behold! I note the blush upon thy cheek,
The flag of truce that tells me thou are meek
And soon wilt yield thy fortress up to me.

It is thy soul; it is thy soul in arms
Which thus I conquer. All thy furtive sighs,
And all the glances of thy wistful eyes,
Proclaim the swift surrender of thy charms.
I kiss thy hand; and tremors and alarms
Discard, in parting, all their late disguise.

of a Violinist ❧

They were not foes. They knew me,
one and all;

They knew I lov'd thee, and they
lured me on

To try my fortune, and to wait
thereon

For just reward. The scaling of the
wall

Was not the meed; there came the
festival,

And now there comes the crown that
I must don.

O my Belovèd! I am king of thee,
And thou my queen; and I will wear
the crown

A little moment, for thy love's
renown.

Yea, for a moment, it shall circle me,

❧ Love Letters

And then be thine, so thou, upon thy
knee,
Do seek the same, with all thy tresses
down.

For woman still is mistress of the man,
Though man be master. 'Tis the
woman's right
To choose her king, and crown him
in her sight,
And make him feel the pressure of the
span
Of her soft arms, as only woman can;
For, with her weakness, she excels
his might.

It is her joy indeed to be so frail
That he must shield her; he of all the
world

of a Violinist ❧

Whom most she loves; and then, if
 he be hurl'd
To depths of sorrow, she will more
 avail
Than half a senate. Troubles may
 assail,
But she will guide him by her lips
 impearl'd.

A woman clung to Cæsar; he was
 great,
And great the power he gain'd by sea
 and land.
But when he wrong'd her, when he
 spurn'd the hand
Which once he knelt to, when he scoff'd
 at Fate,
Glory dispers'd, and left him desolate;
For God remember'd all that first was
 plann'd.

✻ Love Letters

The cannon's roar, the wisdom of the
sage,

The strength of armies, and the thrall
of kings —

All these are weak compared to
weaker things.

Napoleon fell because, in puny rage,
He wrong'd his house; and earth became
a cage

For this poor eagle with his batter'd
wings.

Believe me, Love! I honour, night and
day,

The name of Woman. 'Tis the nobler
sex.

Villains may shame it; sorrows may
perplex;

But still 'tis watchful. Man may take
away

of a Violinist ❀

All its possessions, all its worldly sway,
And yet be worshipp'd by the soul he
wrecks.

A word of love to Woman is as sweet
As nectar'd rapture in a golden bowl;
And when she quaffs the heavens
asunder roll,
And God looks through. And, from
his judgment-seat,
He blesses those who part, and those
who meet,
And blesses those who join the links
of soul with soul.

And are there none untrue? God
knows there are!
Ay, there are those who learn in
time the laugh

❖ Love Letters

That ends in madness — women who
for chaff
Have sold their corn — who seek no
guiding-star,
And find no faith to light them from
afar;
Of whom 'tis said: "They need no
epitaph."

All this is known; but lo! for sake of
One
Who lives in glory — for my mother's
sake,
For thine, and hers, O Love! — I
pity take
On all poor women. Jesu's will be
done!
Honour for all, and infamy for none,
This side the borders of the burning
lake.

LETTER TWELFTH

VICTORY

Now have I reach'd the goal of my
desire,

For thou hast sworn — as sweetly as
a bell

Makes out its chime — the oath I love
to tell,

The fealty-oath of which I never tire.

The lordly forest seems a giant's lyre,

And sings, and rings, the thoughts
that o'er it swell.

The air is fill'd with voices. I have
found

Comfort at last, enthrallment, and a
joy

✻ Love Letters

Past all belief; a peace without alloy.

There is a splendour all about the ground

As if from Eden, when the world was drown'd,

Something had come which death could not destroy.

It seems, indeed, as if to me were sent

A smile from Heaven — as if to-day the clods

Were lined with silk — the trees divining rods,

And roses gems for some high tournament.

I should not be so proud, or so content,

If I could sup, to-night, with all the gods.

of a Violinist ❀

A shrinèd saint would change his place
with me

If he but knew the worth of what I
feel.

He is enrobed indeed, and for his
weal

Hath much concern; but how forlorn is
he!

How pale his pomp! He cannot sue to
thee,

But I am sainted every time I kneel.

I walk'd abroad, to-day, ere yet the
dark

Had left the hills, and down the
' beaten road

I saunter'd forth a mile from mine
abode.

I heard, afar, the watch-dog's sudden
bark,

And, near at hand, the tuning of a
lark,
Safe in its nest, but weighted with an
ode.

The moon was pacing up the sky
serene,
Pallid and pure, as if she late had
shown
Her outmost side, and fear'd to make
it known;
And, like a nun, she gazed upon the
scene
From bars of cloud that seemed to stand
between,
And pray'd and smiled, and smiled
and pray'd alone.

The stars had fled. Not one remain'd
behind

of a Violinist ❄

To warm or comfort; or to make
amends

For hope delay'd, — for ecstasy that
ends

At dawn's approach. The firmament
was blind

Of all its eyes; and, wanton up the wind,
There came the shuddering that the
twilight sends.

The hills exulted at the Morning's
birth, —

And clouds assembled, quick, as her-
alds run

Before a king to say the fight is won.
The rich, warm daylight fell upon the
earth

Like wine outpour'd in madness, or in
mirth,

To celebrate the rising of the sun.

✱ Love Letters

And when the soaring lark had done his
prayer,
The holy thing, self-poised amid the
blue
Of that great sky, did seem, a space
or two,
To pause and think, and then did clip
the air
And dropped to earth to claim his guer-
don there.
“Thank God!” I cried, “My dear-
est dream is true!”

I was too happy, then, to leap and dance;
But I could ponder; I could gaze and
gaze
From earth to sky and back to wood-
land ways.
The bird had thrill'd my heart, and
cheer'd my glance,

of a Violinist ❧

For he had found to-day his nest-
romance,
And lov'd a mate, and crown'd her
with his praise.

O Love! my Love! I would not for a
throne,,

I would not for the thrones of all the
kings

Who yet have liv'd, or for a seraph's
wings,

Or for the nod of Jove when night hath
flown,

Consent to rule an empire all alone.

No! I must have the grace of our two
rings.

I must possess thee from the crowning
curl

Down to the feet, and from the beam-
ing eye

❖ Love Letters

Down to the bosom where my treasures lie.
From blush to blush, and from the rows
of pearl
That light thy smile, I must possess
thee, girl,
And be thy lord and master till I
die.

This, and no less: the keeper of thy
fame,
The proud controller of each silken
tress,
And each dear item of thy loveliness,
And every oath, and every dainty name
Known to a bride: a picture in a frame
Of golden hair, to turn to and caress.

And though I know thee prone, in vacant
hours,

of a Violinist ❧

To laugh and talk with those who circumvent

And make mad speeches; though I know the bent

Of some such men, and though in ladies' bowers

They brag of swords — I know my proven powers;

I know myself and thee, and am content.

I know myself; and why should I demur?

The lily, bowing to the breeze's play,
Is not forgetful of the sun in May.

She is his nymph, and with a servitor

She doth but jest. The sun looks down
at her,

And knows her true, and loves her
day by day.

✻ Love Letters

E'en so I thee, O Lady of my Heart!
O Lady white as lilies on the lea,
And fair as foam upon the ocean free
Whereon the sun hath sent a shining
dart!
E'en so I love thee, blameless as thou art,
And with my soul's desire I compass
thee.

For thou art Woman in the sweetest
sense
Of true endowment, and a bride in-
deed
Fit for Apollo. This is woman's
need:
To be a beacon when the air is dense,
A bower of peace, a lifelong recom-
pense —
This is the sum of Woman's worldly
creed.

of a Violinist ❀

And what is Man the while? And
what his will?

And what the furtherance of his
earthly hope?

To turn to Faith, to turn, as to a
rope

A drowning sailor; all his blood to spill
For One he loves, to keep her out of
ill —

This is the will of Man, and this his
scope.

'Tis like the tranquil sea, that knows
anon

It can be wild, and keep away from
home

A thousand ships — and lash itself to
foam —

And beat the shore, and all that lies
thereon —

❧ Love Letters of a Violinist

And catch the thunder ere the flash has
gone
Forth from the cloud that spans it
like a dome.

This is the will of Man, and this is mine.
But lo! I love thee more than wealth
or fame,
More than myself, and more than
those who came
With Christ's commission from the goal
divine.
Soul of my soul, and mine as I am thine,
I cling to thee, my Life! as fire to
flame.

THE END.





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